

Warfare

Government, Military



Just War Theory Just war theory offers guidelines based on ethical rules of war that are divided into rules on moral obligations of the decision to go to war and those about morality of actions taken in the course of war. The tenets of Just War theory created under this theory can be used to make an assessment of a particular or intended war on ethical basis given that a just war cannot be used to justify unethical actions in that war. Additionally, parties to war should be involved in ethical activities even when the cause for which they are fighting is unjust.

From 1945-1994, the US has been involved in a number of wars that can be assessed to determine if they pass all the tests necessary for a war to be just. The shift of US foreign policy in 1948 from containment to pre-emptive war as emphasized in the Truman Doctrine, led to the establishment of US military hegemony and global economic domination. As the most powerful country in the world, the use saw the need to protect societies all over the world whenever they were threatened especially by the Soviet Union's support for rebel groups that were fighting to establish socialism in many parts of the world. The USA saw these wars as a justified course since it was being waged to protect civilians against the Soviet Union sponsored aggression on sovereign nations (Crawford, 2003).

Among the US- led wars during the cold war period that raise moral questions based on the principles of Jus in Bello is the Yugoslav War. Although the war passed the test of proportionality given that there were no excessive use of force, the element of discrimination which calls for restricting the war to military targets. The decision to use air strikes and no ground troops or low flying aircrafts limited the ability to be accurate when

identifying targets therefore risking the lives of many unarmed civilians and increasing collateral damage during the war (Crawford, 2003).

Issues raised on the basis of comparative justice in the Yugoslav War were also not conserved in the war as it failed to weigh competing visions of justice, opposing versions of history and litany of victimization. There are divergent views of the war with the Serbs asserting that Kosovo Liberation Army had links to the Mafia drug dealing among other atrocities while the Serbs disapproved the blatant aggression against their sovereign state by US-led intervention given that they had not attacked any other nation (Crawford, 2003).

The justifications for the U. S. invasion of Iraq were based on two critical points that generated support for calls by the then US president, Bush. Saddam's regime was accused of supporting terrorism activities towards the United States through provision of technology and expertise to make and deliver weapons of mass destruction. The regime was therefore seen as posing danger to world peace, however, some of the tenets of just war were flaunted by the reasons advanced by the bush administration for example; the tenet on legitimate authority was not passed given the fact that if Iraq was in contravention of UN sanctions, the United Nations would be the legitimating authority to sanction the war and not the US. Additionally, there is a lack of proof and presence controversies raised by reports that Iraq was planning an attack against the United States or US interests using weapons of mass destruction has raised (Wester, 2005).

There are many changes that make traditional justifications for war to differ from the modern justifications as a result of changing nature of how wars are

fought in the contemporary world. While traditional warfare targeted a specific nation, contemporary justification for war is based on the need to end terrorism perpetrated by groups that in some cases might not have links to the states in which they operate therefore making it difficult to combat them. However, the need to protect unarmed civilians is still an important aspect whenever such an engagement is undertaken (Wester, 2005).

References

- Wester, F. E. (2005). Preemption and just war: Considering the case of Iraq. *Parameters*, 34(4), 20-39.
- Crawford, N. C. (2003). Just war theory and the US counter terror war. *Perspective on Politics*, 1(1), 5-25.